

HOUSING FUTURES



Volume 3 Issue 3— July 2013

General Meeting 20 May 2013

Despite a cold and wet night, 32 members attended the SouthEast Housing Co-operative Ltd General Meeting between 7:10 - 9:15p.m. on Monday 20 May 2013 in the View Room at the Dandenong Club, Dandenong. The meeting adopted a new Strategic Directions 2013-2016, agreed to discontinue the Communications Working Group, considered the differences between HPF and General Leases, provided guidelines for the board on its negotiations with DHS through the Community Housing Federation of Victoria and discussed how services to members could be improved.

A General Meeting is Co-operative Democracy



Listening



Reading



Speaking



Voting



<https://twitter.com/SEHCOOP>

Followers: 157 Tweets: 77 (14 July 2013)

COOPERATIVE ENTERPRISES BUILD A BETTER WORLD



MANAGEMENT MATTERS



MEMBER SATISFACTION

Ian McLaren
General Manager

Context is critical to understanding reality and, therefore, our perception and knowledge of reality. At the General Meeting on 20 May 2013 there was an important discussion of how services could be improved to members. The Discussion Group Reports are included in this newsletter and on the web site at <http://www.sehc.org.au/index.php/news/meetings/634-gmdg20may2013>

It is important, however, to note the results of our most recent member satisfaction survey and the results of a social housing tenant satisfaction survey undertaken by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

Members have been asked to rate their satisfaction with housing services, consideration of their views and maintenance services. A record number of 88 members (55.69%) responded to the survey - compared with 41.5% last year. On Housing Services, 79 (90.80%) were either Very Satisfied or Fairly Satisfied. This compares with 89.4% in 2012. The rating for similar providers in 2012 was 90%. On Consideration of Views, 76 (86.36%) were either Very Satisfied or Fairly Satisfied. This compares with 78.8% in 2012. The rating for similar agencies in 2012 was 84.4%. On Maintenance Services, 73 (84.88%) were either Very Satisfied or Fairly Satisfied. This compares with 81.8% in 2012. The rating for similar providers in 2012 was 83.5%.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has just released the National Social Housing Survey: Summary of National Results. The results are published in Bulletin 117, May 2013. Tenant satisfaction with services provided by housing organisations was (a) indigenous - public housing 56% and community housing 67% (b) non-indigenous - public housing 65% and community housing 74%. Satisfaction of 65% for public housing was down from 73% in 2010. Satisfaction of 74% for community housing was down from 79% in 2010. The level of satisfaction with maintenance was (a) day-to-day maintenance - public housing 71% and community housing 76%. and (b) emergency maintenance - public housing 77% and community housing 79%. The survey was mailed to a random sample which included 55,101 public housing and 17,570 community housing households. The response rate was 16% for public housing and 17% for community housing.

Both surveys demonstrate that SouthEast service provision is better than the norm, and is improving compared with the norm, where service delivery satisfaction levels have decreased, since 2010. We should be proud of this outcome but certainly not complacent, for there is always scope for improvement and your feedback is essential to our capacity to improve service delivery.

NSW BEDROOM TAX

In the previous issue of Housing Futures we reported that a bedroom tax had been introduced in the UK. The NSW Government has now introduced a bedroom tax. Read the NSW Government news release:



Minister for Family and Community Services Pru Goward today announced new incentives so more needy families can access public housing.

There are over 17,000 large public housing homes in NSW with three or more bedrooms which are only occupied by singles or couples. This means there are over 35,000 vacant bedrooms that could be used to house needy families on the waiting list.

The NSW Government's new initiatives to fill vacant bedrooms will free up public housing for those who need it most by:

Giving priority to transferring tenants who are not using all bedrooms, so they can move into a more suitably sized home more quickly. Placing a new vacant bedroom charge on heavily subsidised public housing tenants if they choose to continue to live in a property with a number of vacant bedrooms.

"We understand that vacant bedrooms often come about because public housing tenants' families grow up and leave home, or because of family breakdown, just like other families," Ms Goward said.

"Single tenants and couples who are living in large properties should move to a more suitably sized home when one is available. This is only fair and reasonable, both to vulnerable families on the waiting list as well as NSW taxpayers that heavily subsidise public housing.

"Priority status on the transfer list will be given to tenants who agree to relocate when they are approached by Housing NSW, and to tenants who happily put their hands up to move to a smaller home.

"A charge of \$20 per week for singles and \$30 per week for couples will be placed on tenants that refuse to consider alternative suitable accommodation. The same charge will also be applied if a tenant refuses two suitable offers of alternative accommodation and chooses to remain in an oversized property. This will act not only as an incentive to house more needy families with children, but will mean that tenants pay a fairer contribution for vacant bedrooms. "

"Housing NSW will, in September, start by targeting areas with large numbers of tenants who are living in homes which are bigger than they need and where families are waiting for housing – such as Liverpool, Shellharbour and Mount Druitt. "Tenants will generally be offered a property in the same area as they currently live, unless they demonstrate a need to live in a different location.

"NSW Labor and their revolving door of failed housing ministers left our State with an unsustainable public housing system. Since coming to government, the NSW Liberals & Nationals have started real reforms to improve services, and the vacant bedroom charge builds on improvements to make waiting lists transparent and crack down on tenants doing the wrong thing. We are making it easier for tenants to move to smaller homes so vulnerable families are not left waiting, but they need to know that refusing this assistance will result in additional costs," Ms Goward said.

GENERAL LEASE SIGNED



After extensive negotiations with DHS, SouthEast has signed a General Lease, together with the final Management Guidelines, effective from 1st July 2013.

It was imperative that the new General Lease was signed by both SouthEast and the Director of Housing, prior to the 30th June 2013. If not, we would have been forced to wait until mid July or later before transferring from the HPF Lease — involving “messy” adjustments with DHS for partial Asset Management Fees and Council Rates & Water Service Fees.

The major benefits of the new General Lease include the following advantages: 1. The new General Lease is for 5 years, whereas the current HPF Lease only has 1 more year to run. 2. Projected Surplus under the

General Lease is \$290,000, whereas under the HPF Lease is only \$60,000. 3. Under a General Lease, there is no requirement to submit CCB Projects for approval to DHS. 4. SouthEast will have far greater autonomy over Asset Management Plans & maintenance Budgets. The General Lease meets the requirements established by the General Meeting of members on 20 May 2013.

A board meeting on 28 June 2013 congratulated General Manager Ian McLaren on his work towards securing the General Lease.



General Manager Ian McLaren is pointing out to Chairperson Shirley Faram, key aspects of the General Lease before signing.

HPF and General Leases

At the General Meeting on 20 May 2013 the General Manager explained the difference for SouthEast of having a HPF Lease or a General Lease with the Department of Human Services.

High Impact Budget Item	Housing Provider Framework Lease (HPF)	General Lease (GL)	Cost (-) Benefit (+)
Asset Management Fee	Paid to DHS each year for rates and cyclical maintenance. \$327,000 and \$315,000 last two years and increasing to \$505,000 in 2013-14.	No Asset Management Fee paid to DHS.	+ \$505,000
Council rates	Paid by DHS	Paid by SouthEast. 2013 -14 estimate \$200,000	(\$200,000)
Water service charges	Paid by DHS	Paid by SouthEast. 2013 -14 estimate \$75,000	(\$75,000)
Insurance for properties	DHS responsible	DHS responsible	NIL
Lease period	One year.	Five years	+ 4 years
Community Capacity Building (CCB) Projects	DHS assigns a CCB budget allocation to SouthEast, based on a DHS formula calculated surplus for the year. SouthEast then negotiates the projects with DHS.	No CCB projects mandated by DHS. SouthEast determines what the Agency spends the actual surplus on each year.	Substantial time saved in preparing and acquitting CCB project plans, plus a significant increase of the level of self determination on expenditures of surplus.
NET (COST) BENEFIT			+\$230,000

Subsequently, the General Meeting adopted this resolution:

The SouthEast board considered at its meeting on 3 May 2013 whether it had enough information to decide and recommend to members in principle support for switching from a HPF Lease to a General Lease and this recommended **but** subject to meeting four critical conditions:

That SouthEast is not financially disadvantaged.

That there is agreement between the parties (DHS and SouthEast) on condition reports for all the DHS properties and acceptance by DHS for upgrades necessary within 12 months and acceptance of fair wear and tear with regard to the condition reports.

That there is agreement between the parties (DHS and SouthEast) on appropriate property insurance arrangements.

That the lease between members and the co-operative are not affected.

BOARD ACTION

At the General Meeting on 20 May 2013 the General Manager advised members that following the discussion groups on services that a report would be tabled at the board meeting on 31 May 2013., the Discussion Notes would be uploaded to the web site, there would be progress reports in the Housing Futures newsletter and the SouthEast web site and that a formal report would be prepared for the AGM on 18 November 2013. This commitment was reaffirmed at a meeting of the board on 31 May 2013. In the following pages we have reproduced the Discussion Group Reports pp. 7—10 and reported on Emergency Maintenance p 11, Maintenance Feedback p 12 and Rental Arrears p 13. We have also included an extract from DHS Guidelines for Managing DHS Properties under a General Lease pp. 14



XMAS PARTY

There will be a XMAS Party this year on 1 December 2013 for all SouthEast families. Presents and entertainment for all who attend.

MORNING TEA



There will be a Morning Tea for all interested members at the SouthEast Office 11 October 2013. Tea/coffee and cakes will be provided. It is an opportunity to see the new Office.

You need to register for both events by 31 August 2013. Complete the Event Registration Form that is enclosed with this newsletter.

DISCUSSION GROUP REPORTS



Members were invited to form focus groups during the General Meeting to address this question: **How can services be improved?**

There were two rounds of discussion by six discussion groups Numbers 1 through to 6.

Round One discussion groups. 15 minutes Round Two discussion groups 15 minutes The discussion groups were followed by: Report back session 15 minutes

When the discussion groups first met in Round One they selected a host who remained with the group e.g. 1 and hosted Round Two.

At the completion of Round One of the discussion, the host remained while the others joined different Round Two discussion groups.

At the beginning of the Round Two discussion the host summarised the Round One discussion.

At the end of the Second Round there was a report back session where the discoveries and insights that emerged in the discussions were shared.

Members were advised that:

A report would be tabled at the board meeting on 31 May 2013.

Discussion notes would be uploaded to the web site.

There would be progress reports in Housing Futures newsletter and the SouthEast web site.

A formal report would be prepared for the AGM on 18 November 2013.

There was probably insufficient time for the Second Round to achieve the expectation of deepening the analysis by members during the First Round discussion. There was insufficient time for the meeting to discuss the discoveries and insights. Nonetheless, a significant process now begins with how the board chooses to respond and the perception of this response.

DISCUSSION GROUP REPORTS



What follows is a literal transcript of the notes provided by each host from the six discussion groups.

There has been no editing as this would change how and what was reported at the meeting.

Separate notes of the verbal reports, based on the written notes, were also recorded but these have not been reconciled with the written notes.

Group 1



Rent arrears - more time to pay before receiving letter "notice to vacate."

More communication re Tenancy Officer.

Maintenance follow-up

More voluntary work within co-op

Charity fundraisers.

Social calendar.

How is market rent assessed?

Group 2



Option to have paper free (email only) notification.

Long-term (cyclical) maintenance are due or relooked at (use emails). Provide a list of priorities so estimate of time til done or looked at.

Follow-up of completed trade work (e.g. job not up to standard.) Use emails.

Guest speakers more tenant focused. (Useful information)

Barter system based on hours (e.g. one hour gardening swap for one hour ironing)

DISCUSSION GROUP REPORTS

Group 3

Maintenance issues with completion of fixes and follow-through of works done.

Like to have feedback on jobs done re time frames and quality of work.

Happy at meeting times being shorter – children concerns.

What is the bedroom tax?

Would like social events for all members – not just for children.

Would like air conditioning installed.

Very happy with rents.

Forms for babysitting – need more time to fill in and send back.



Group 4

Newsletter—How is cover determined= scare mongering or attention?

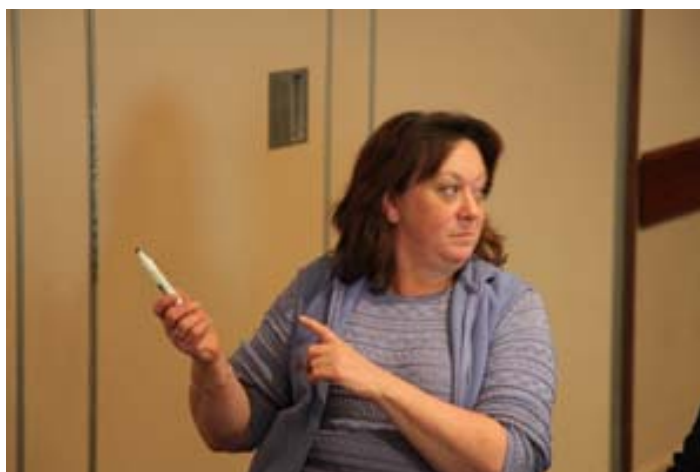
Explain significance of bedroom tax.

Maintenance – Quick to respond. More than happy. Signing form when completed or notify Jim

Member participation - how to control number of members attending, more rigid rules, 2 or more meetings. Meeting attendance – both adults in family become members. Alternate to attend meetings.

Photographs at meeting – Check with members (survey) if ok with photographer. Could be a deterrent? One meeting per year in areas – help with local connections – car pools. Re-mind ourselves of how lucky we are re housing.

Maybe put praise in newsletter.



DISCUSSION GROUP REPORTS



Group 5

Member mentioned that sometimes when you have a maintenance problem you feel like you are being blamed and feel like you have to justify what went wrong.

Because of this members have felt disinclined to ask for things to be done e.g. a member waited six months before reporting an electrical fault.

More personal things e.g. if someone or someone's partner dies should be mentioned in writing in the newsletter.

Open Day.

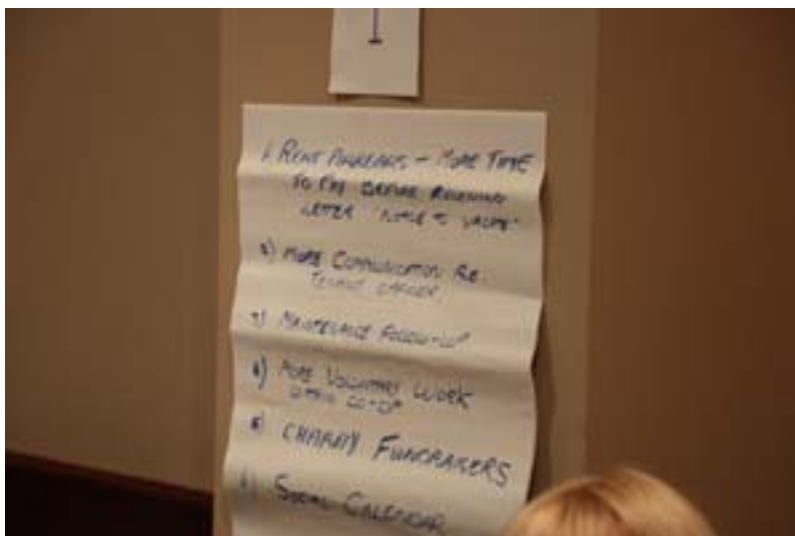
Sometimes tradies have a bad attitude and try to get the cheapest outcomes.

When the workers think "Govt" rather than co-op they don't aspire for quality – because they "get paid" anyway.

An electrician would not come for a small job.

A plumber – overflow shower – only temporary fix e.g. plunger.

Group 6



Working bees

Casual/informal coffee days

Contact social.

Xmas in office

Open Day office

Meetings in Office

Area Xmas parties

Snow trip

EMERGENCY MAINTENANCE

Procedures have been established if you have an emergency maintenance procedure. Emergency maintenance is defined as an urgent repair that is a threat to your health and safety and is usually related to gas, electricity or water.

If it is an electrical problem, turn off power and check fuses.

If it is a gas problem, check that the gas meter is turned on.

If hot water is not working check fuse damage or pilot light.

If a burst water pipe, turn off water at the meter.

If a pipe is blocked attempt to clear blockage with a plunger and bicarb of soda.

If you cannot solve the problem and it's during office hours, call the Property Officer at 9706 8005.

If it's outside office hours, call one of the contacts and report the problem. If it is considered an emergency then they will contact a tradesperson or give you authority to do so.

If you are unable to contact any staff at the office or one of your contacts and you are sure that the problem is a threat to your health and safety, then organize for the repairs to be fixed by a tradesperson from the list on the emergency procedures notice. Please notify the office as soon as possible.

The full emergency maintenance procedures are on the web site:

<http://www.sehc.org.au/index.php/services/maintenance>

Copies of the procedures are mailed to members each year before XMAS. In the meantime, you can contact the office and copy will be mailed or emailed.

Update on sehc.org.au—new articles on the SouthEast web site:

[Co-operatives in Australia - A Manual](#)

[Cabinet Housing](#)

[Homelessness Services](#)

[Housing Incentives in NSW](#)

[Halve Homelessness QLD](#)

[Affordable Housing WA](#)

[Home Ownership Town Camp](#)

[Social Benefit Bonds NSW](#)

[NSW Budget and Housing Supply](#)

[Edinburgh's Colonies](#)

[Indigenous Remote Housing](#)

[Social Housing Satisfaction](#)

[SA Budget and Affordable Housing](#)

[Social Housing and Qld Budget](#)


[Under-occupancy in Queensland](#)

MAINTENANCE FEEDBACK



Jim Kokoras, Property Officer

Feedback Options

 03 97056 8005

Email: jim@sehc.org.au

Facsimile:  03 9706 8558

Online:

<http://www.sehc.org.au/index.php/services/maintenance-form>

Maintenance at [sehc.org.au](http://www.sehc.org.au)

<http://www.sehc.org.au/index.php/services/maintenance>

Feedback is critical to our capacity to deliver a satisfactory maintenance service. Whether you are satisfied or dissatisfied with a maintenance job, we would appreciate your feedback on a job.

In the absence of feedback, we have to assume that members are satisfied with the service provided.

Complaints about maintenance are taken very seriously and will be investigated.

We do not assume that members should be grateful for the service. It is your right to receive a quality service and we expect a quality service from our tradies.

Random inspections are undertaken of maintenance jobs completed but there is a limit to how many inspections can be made throughout the year. During 2010-2011, for instance, 995 separate maintenance jobs were completed.

It is important that members are familiar with the sections on maintenance in the Member Manual:

<http://sehc.org.au/index.php/publications/>

SouthEast Video Stats



The films were uploaded to YouTube on 27—29 February 2012. Numbers in brackets—times viewed as at 11 July 2013.

Total You Tube views—3358

The Trailer (1023)

<http://youtu.be/z1Y813L-xR4> 2m

The Other Way Home (1382)

<http://youtu.be/9R4ZCACLgJE> 12m 41s

Advertorial—Co-operation Works (953)

<http://youtu.be/x59NDnT3apo> 30s

Privacy: SouthEast is committed to protecting your privacy and complying with all applicable privacy laws. If you have any questions or comments about our privacy practices, we can be contacted at PO Box 7141, Dandenong Phone: 3175. 03 9706 8005. Fax 03 9706 8558

RENTAL ARREARS

I've had some unexpected bills lately, Joy

This is often the typical response to one of the calls I regularly make to members whose rent payments are in arrears, and there has been no response to my letters.

We need to work out a plan I said, so the arrears are paid back as quickly as possible, to avoid receiving a Notice to Vacate.

I don't know how I can catch up the member said. We talked a bit more and found a way that was mutually acceptable to the member and Southeast Housing.

Too many members who get into rent arrears avoid contact with the office, not answering letters or responding to my telephone calls.

Once contact is established, more often than not come the excuses and promises to pay. The excuses include I needed to fix the car, I need to pay the dentist, my gas or electricity bill was very high or I need to pay school fees. The promises are, to pay by the end of the week or starting at the beginning of the month. Once made promises should be kept, but unfortunately they are not always honoured.

Should any members get into rent arrears, do not try and avoid contact with Joy. Whilst you may be embarrassed and unable to see a way out of the situation, members should always contact the office as soon as they see a problem with rent payments being late.



Joy Haines, Tenancy Officer

Feedback Options

Telephone: 📞 03 9706 8005

Email: joy@sehc.org.au

Facsimile: 📠 03 9706 8558

Online:

<http://www.sehc.org.au/index.php/services/tenancy-form>

Tenancy at [sehc.org.au](http://www.sehc.org.au)

<http://www.sehc.org.au/index.php/services/tenancy>

REMEMBER, IF YOU SPEAK TO JOY ON 9706 8005 THERE IS ALWAYS A WAY TO RECTIFY THE PROBLEM.

Board Meetings 2013

26 July, 30 August, 27 September and 25 October

Extract :

Guidelines for Managing DHS Properties under a General Lease

Policies for tenant eligibility, allocation and rent setting for community housing properties leased to Registered Housing Agencies from the Department of Human Services

Introduction.

Partnership with Registered Housing Agencies (RHAs) is a key way the Victorian Government provides affordable housing to those unable to afford or access the private market. The Department of Human Services (DHS) has established policies to ensure that RHAs who are leasing properties from DHS are providing housing to those most in need.

This document provides an overview of current policy directives for RHAs that are leasing properties from DHS under the General Lease Agreement. Reference to tenants and leases in the Guidelines refers to those people who are residing in DHS leased community housing.

Eligibility

Income Eligibility

The income eligibility limits for applicants for DHS leased community housing are the same as those applied to public housing applicants. Income eligibility limits are outlined in the following table:

Income Eligibility Limits for Applicants for DHS Leased Community Housing
Applicable from July 2013

	Household Size	
Single person	Couple, no dependents	Family (one or two parents) with one dependent child Plus \$89 for each extra child under 13 years Plus \$120 for each child aged 13 to 17 years
\$497 per week*	\$862 per week*	\$896 per week*

More in next issue of Housing Futures
Copies of the full Guidelines are available from the
General Manager Ian McLaren.

Workshop Homework

26 April and 5 July 2013

General Manager, Ian McLaren, and consultant Cathy Whelan doing their “homework” before the start of the second workshop with directors of SouthEast.



The board of SouthEast has recently participated in two workshops facilitated by Cathy Whelan from RECKON Community and Organisational Development.

The two workshops discussed the Co-operative College Skills Audit undertaken by Chris Cooper in 2012 and developed an action plan and priorities for the SouthEast board learning and development.

A revised board code of conduct was developed at the second workshop. Work was also undertaken on a board agenda template.

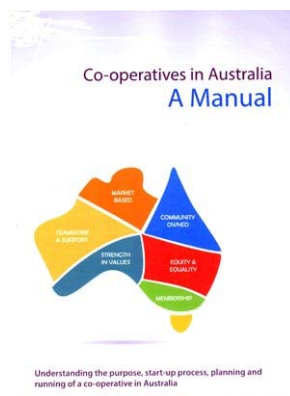
Ongoing training opportunities are provided to directors, as it is recognised that this is in the interest of the co-operative.

Workshops are also being provided to directors, over a three session period, before the monthly board meetings, on financial statements by Steven Grange, Business Development Manager, First Option Credit Union.

<http://www.firstoptioncu.com.au>

Directors doing their “homework” during the second workshop.





Co-operatives in Australia - A Manual published by the NSW Federation of Co-operatives & RDA Mid North Coast Inc, July 2013. Authors: Kay Cooper (Regional Development Consultant), Todd Green (Research and Policy Officer, Regional Development Australia - Mid North Coast) and Peter Tregilgas (Executive Officer, Regional Development Australia - Mid North Coast).

Who should read this manual?

This manual is designed to assist anyone who wants to start or join a co-operative, and also increase the understanding of members already involved in co-operatives across Australia.

Co-operatives are usually formed by new groups of people who are interested in working together to achieve a particular goal. They may also be formed when another incorporated body such as an association, a company or an indigenous entity decides that the co-operative structure is better suited to its purpose and membership base.

So this manual is also designed to assist members of other entity types to understand the pros and cons of the co-operative structure (compared with their existing structure).

This manual was prepared on the assumption that the Co-operatives National Law (CNL) or alternative consistent legislation has commenced in a jurisdiction. At the time of writing the CNL or alternative consistent legislation is likely to be commenced in each state and territory sometime in 2013, although the commencement time will vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

The CNL will not apply to certain mutuals such as credit unions, mutual building societies and friendly societies as these organisations are federally regulated. The CNL also does not apply to certain housing co-operatives, including co-operative housing bodies assisting members to achieve home or land ownership under the Co-operative Housing and Starr-Bowkett Societies Act 1998, or similar bodies that are not registered under that Act.

Co-operatives in Australia—A Manual can be accessed at:

<http://www.sehc.org.au/index.php/news/cooperation/652-cooperativesmanual>

Board Public Records

Public records of board meetings are available on the SouthEast web site at:

<http://www.sehc.org.au/index.php/board/public-records>

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